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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

This has been the week that vacations are meant to be weather-wise! Sure, the weekend started off slow with intermittent showers, but it improved quickly. All the "major" outdoor projects have been completed - the pool is open, the vegetables have been planted (other than some seedlings still starting), the flowers are in and the gardens mulched, and the lawn cut. Yesterday was actually a day for doing a lot of nothing! Well, okay, I had the stitches removed from my mouth and didn't feel much like doing anything afterward!

So, in the spirit of rest and relaxation, there will be no commentary on the world of technology this week. Even though the Microsoft antitrust case is making headlines again (big surprise there!), Napster is still having problems - even in bankruptcy, the web censorship zealots are still at it with regard to web filtering, and more fodder for debate - I'll stick to the position that vacation is more important! And to prove it, time to hit the deck in a nice comfortable lounge chair, cool drink in hand! Joe, eat your heart out! <grin>

Until next time...

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HighWire 0.05 Information

While the HighWire development team works on resolving a few last bugs before the next beta release, you can now get a glimpse of what lies ahead.

There are 4 new screenshots available on the HighWire site and as can be seen there, the support for graphics is what will be the big addition to the upcoming HighWire release!

If you are curious about what HighWire is capable of at this point, you

need to pay the site a visit :)

<http://highwire.atari-users.net>

P.S. We now have a new Highwire Users mailing list, visit the Highwire site for information on joining the list.

Icon Extract 1.3

Hello,

Here is a new version of Extract Icon that you will be able to download on my site. A lot of news to the menu...

Best regard,
Florent LAFABRIE

WARNING : I research for a person for the translation of the RSC file and the HYP help file. Thank's for your support.

Welcome in this new version,

Novelties :

- o Support of icons to the XPM format (Linux).
- o Support of the DRAG protocol DROP and toward INTERFACE.
- o Support of the DRAG DROP and of a file on the icon of the program under TOS, Mint and Magic.
- o Possibility to associate the ICO files, CUR, ANI, ICL, DLL and XPM to the program (Newdesk, Jinnee, Thing...).
- o Support of the AV protocol toward ZOOM, RSM and INTERFACE.
- o Support of the long filenames under Magic and Mint.
- o Utilization of routines NVDI 5.xx for the transfer of an icon 8 bit in fashion 4 and 1 bit (with or no dithering).
- o Themes for desktop and windows.
- o Possibility to see the RSC files in 256, 16 and 2 colors.
- o Possibility to suppress the window of treatment in order to use another program in multitask fashion.
- o New window of information on the material and the used fashion video.
- o New file for ST-guide.
- o By default, the file for ST-guide is read since the repertory of ICON Extract, otherwise in the repertory of the HYP files specified in the ST-GUIDE.INF file.
- o New files of configuration (incorporation of themes of desktop and window).

Following bug corrections :

- o Redraw correct of windows of the application under Magic.
- o Redraw correct of the bar of the main window at the time of a displacement.
- o Rewrite of the ICONIFY routines and ALLICONIFY.
- o Display correct of bars of windows of the other applications in multitask mode.
- o Programs is no more blocking in multitask mode.

- o Programs functions now in all graphic fashions (1 bit to the 32 bits).
- o The allocated memory is henceforth correct. Thank's to Eric REBOUX for the MEMDEBUG program.

Contact me by email: lafabrie@club-internet.fr
 Internet site: <http://perso.club-internet.fr/lafabrie>

New Version of UPX

There is a new UPX version on <http://upx.sourceforge.net/>

UPX is an Ultimate Packer for eXecutables. It supports many different architectures including ATARI.

Halcyon Days Book Available Online

Halcyon Days: Interviews with Classic Video and Computer Programmers has is now available online. This is a book of interviews with 8-bit game programmers that I read years ago when it cost \$20. There's an Atari bias among the choice of interviewees, even including some authors of games only available through the Atari Program Exchange.

<http://www.dadgum.com/halcyon/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
 compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Have you ever gotten to the point in a career or relationship or whatever when you just want to say "screw it all" and just take off in a different direction? I'm not QUITE at that point, but it's getting close.

What is it about life that makes us take up that attitude every so often? Could it be nature's way of telling us that it's time for a change? Or maybe our little inner voice... that tiny little nagging feeling inside us that urges us to do things every once in a while... telling us that something just isn't like it used to be. Regardless of what it is that gives us that urge, it shows up every once in a while and gives us a little kick in the pants.

Perhaps it's not really the message that's important, but the fact that we hear it. I don't want to get too philosophical, but I think that part of what makes us... well, us... is the fact that we feel the need for

change every now and then. Even if we don't change, it lets us know that change is possible.

Normally, when someone asks me about dealing with computers, I tell them that it's all about options. Computers give us more options than we've ever had before. The problem usually occurs when we can't handle having all those options. There's a point when too much information just overloads us and we need to get out from under the sheer weight of it. The trick is knowing when and how to do it.

Most of us haven't yet mastered the art of "unplugging". I know that I haven't. I've pretty much made "deciding not to decide" an art form. For instance... since my favorite computer manufacturer hasn't made a single computer for ages and I need a new computer every so often, I simply purchased a new computer that I could run an emulator on. You see? Deciding not to decide!

Of course, I do run 'native' applications on the new machine, but that's just work. When I'm running one of the available emulators (or "alternative operating systems")... even if I'm not actually running something important... I feel good. THIS is the way things used to be. I never really understood the feeling of nostalgia until I started running an emulator on a fast computer.

Just seeing that familiar green desktop is a tonic for the soul. Hey, I told you about the "deciding not to decide" thing.

As a side note, both of the ST emulators for the Mac are really fast. It's the first time I've run an emulator and not felt that nasty jerky-motion thing so common with emulators. I still haven't had time to put either of the emulators through their paces, but the general look and feel of both of them is just terrific.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info available on the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'Chris' posts:

"One thing which I still don't get is what the Atari cookie jar is all about. Only thing I know is that it wasn't used until latter versions of TOS, I think."

Dan Ackerman tells Chris:

"The short story is that it's a method for publishing system extensions to a common area. If you have an Auto folder program like GDOS that a programmer can use, it publishes a cookie to the cookie jar stating it's existence.

The program checks the cookie jar when it starts (usually) to find if features it wants to have available are available. If we find a GDOS cookie present with an acceptable value, then we know that certain

routines are available for use in the program.

The cookie jar also contains a pointer for the program to find routines or functionality provided by the auto folder program.

If we didn't have a cookie jar, then we would probably have several different methods of individual applications reporting their existence to programs that might want to use them.

You can think of it in a way like an old fashioned bulletin board. When a program is successfully ran from the auto folder it puts it's card on the bulletin board with it's name and address. When you want to use that auto program, you go to the bulletin board and see if it's card is there and if it is you get it's address."

Chris tells Dan:

"Thanks for the reply, Its a bit more clear now. Do you know if there's any guides to cookies at all ? There info for just about everything else I can think of so I assume there must be some articles about it somewhere?"

Adam Klobukowski tells Chris:

"If you are developing any program that you want to create new cookie please try not to, especially if you want to pass any pointers to your program memory space through cookies.

Please, avoid using cookie for anything other than passing information that your program "exists" in memory (if possible)."

Standa Opichal asks:

"Is there any other mechanism to let the other application read my data? I know this approach breaks the memory protection rules. But what should one use e.g. to publish an interface?

Maybe a use of an SLB would be a solution. But how the SLB should check whether the feature it needs is present or not?"

Adam tells Standa:

"If your program is some kind of library that adds additional functionality, then the best way is SLB. But if your program is TSR the you should use shared memory (available in MiNT and MagiC). Keep in mind that if two processes share memory region they can see it under different addresses so passing pointers is not acceptable.

You can also use pipes (and I think this is a best solution for TSR)."

Joseph Place asks about one of my favorite email options:

"Is there a web-based e-mail provider available that will work with CAB? (I use CAB 2.7)"

James Haslam tells Joseph:

"Yeah I think that Atari-Users.Net has Cab friendly webmail."

Rob Mahlerlert of Atari-Users.Net (and, incidentally, A-ONE) tells Joseph and James:

"We do offer a free web based e-mail system on Atari-Users.Net. But We are moving to a new server and are not accepting new e-mail accounts until we have the mail system working.

Hopefully within the next few weeks we will have everything working."

Bob Retelle asks about restoring ST disk images:

".ST disk images. I couldn't find this via a Google search (turns out Google drops the "." and searches for every instance of "st"- you can imagine how many articles THAT turns up..!).

What archiver should I use to restore .st disk image files..?

Is there one good one that can deal with multiple styles of disk images?"

Stephane Perez replies to Bob:

"For what kind of computer? ST or PC ?

On an Atari ST, you can use JayMSA, it can deal with .MSA, .ST and .DIM files. Check this : <http://phoenix.inf.upol.cz/~opichals/jay/>

Well folks, I know it's short, but that's it for this week. People must be out and about, enjoying the longer and (marginally) warmer days. Personally, I think it's just a fad. <grin>

Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - JagFest 2K2 News!
 Online Gaming Buzz Builds!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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## Buzz Builds for Online Gaming on Xbox, PlayStation

Spencer Cheveallier could only watch as a double-dealing friend plucked a powerful sword from the loot that lay scattered around his lifeless body.

Cheveallier, the very-much-alive manager of a video game store in Memphis, Tennessee, had seen his character die and his valuables plundered in an online version of "Phantasy Star" on the Sega Dreamcast ( news - web sites) video game system.

Cheveallier's advice? You can't trust a stranger on the Internet.

But Sony Corp. and Microsoft Corp. are betting that video game players will do just that as they get ready to launch the next-generation of Internet gaming on the PlayStation and Xbox consoles.

The challenge, of course, will be persuading game players to spend even more money for the opportunity to slay monsters or just play football with someone across the street, overseas, or wherever else the Internet is available.

While the technology is impressive -- Microsoft will even sell a telephone-style headset that allows people to gloat when they score a goal or do away with someone -- there are still players who have their doubts.

Online services mean higher costs, new technological challenges, and a different style of play to be learned.

"The idea of paying and paying and paying again just doesn't seem to thrill [customers] too much," said Piers Pilkington, a salesman at Iceman Video Games in Toronto. "There haven't been too many people who have been really that interested."

Still, Pilkington said, the excitement could build once the game systems start selling the technology and the buzz about the Internet-enabled games themselves goes around.

The three video game console makers have unveiled plans for Internet gaming -- but each one is slightly different.

Sony, which has the largest following with more than 11 million PlayStation 2 systems sold in North America, is launching a service in August. A kit sold for \$39.99 will make it possible for users to connect the console to the Internet via a phone line or high-speed connection.

For now, the only added expense will be the cost of the games themselves and Internet access. Sony is not charging a monthly fee, though in the future some game vendors may charge extra for online services.

Microsoft, whose Xbox comes enabled with a high-speed Internet adapter, will launch Xbox Live in the fall. Dial-up Internet access is not allowed

-- too slow, Microsoft says. A \$49 fee covers a one-year subscription, but games cost extra.

Also this fall, Nintendo will sell a \$34.95 dial-up modem adapter for its Gamecube system.

For his customers at Games Plus in Memphis, Cheveallier said the combined expense is a big drawback.

Add \$199 for a game system, \$50 a month more for high-speed Internet access, and another \$50 or so for an online game subscription, and you get a price tag that may keep some people playing against each other face-to-face, not over the Internet, he said.

But, for those who already have high-speed Internet access - or even a dial-up connection -- online gaming could be a real draw.

Some of today's players have also experimented with online games on the Sega Dreamcast. Sega no longer makes the Dreamcast system, but the company proved that it is possible to build an entertaining online service.

There may also be an appealing crossover for people who play games on personal computers. PC games have already attracted a loyal audience of online players.

In perhaps the most extreme example of the passion PC games have generated, addicts of role-playing game "Everquest," a fantasy world of dungeons and crypts, can spend real money to buy weapons or other equipment for their characters.

Microsoft may be best positioned to draw in PC gamers, said Hilary Goldstein, who reviews Xbox games for IGN Entertainment , a video game information publisher.

"The Xbox is basically marketed more to the PC gamers, who are generally more inclined to be online anyway," Goldstein said.

And while the buzz about the first online games circulates, excitement is building at video game stores everywhere.

"People are lazy," said Logan Crookston, describing the draw of online games for his customers at Game Force Denver, in Colorado.

"Just plug the Xbox in the wall and play with people who are states away," he said. "It's a whole lot easier than going somewhere."

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -      Online Users Growl & Purr!
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## Sponsors Announced for Jagfest 2002

For Immediate Release:  
June 14, 2002

The organizers of The Sixth Annual Jaguar Festival (dubbed Jag fest 2k2) are pleased to announce the current line of sponsors:

Atari Jaguar Directory:  
an online directory listing of Atari Jaguar owners from around the world. E-mail: Randy@atarijaguar.net  
Website: <http://atarijaguardirectory.com>

The Game Trader:  
A St. Louis area video game dealer that sells classic and contemporary consoles and games. Located in St. Charles, Mo., at 2 Hawks Nest Plaza.  
Directions: Directions: I-70 to Highway 94, south to the South Outer Road. Turn right (west), go one half mile from 94 to Hawks Nest Plaza at the Hawks Nest Drive overpass. Phone:1-636-723-0072.

Good Deal Games:  
An online video game retailer that provides games for classic and orphaned systems. Their website also provides information on video gaming past.  
Michael Thomasson, President  
Website: <http://www.gooddealgames.com>

Songbird Productions:  
An online video game retailer and developer of Atari Jaguar and Lynx games. Their store also hosted the third Jagfest in MN.  
Carl Forhan, President  
Website: <http://www.songbird.atari.net>

Telegames:  
An online retailer and direct mail of video games for various game systems. They also develop Atari games for the Jaguar and Lynx like Zero 5, Breakout 2k and Worms for the Jaguar and Dessert Strike for the Lynx. Telegames was also one of the first sponsors of Jag fest.  
Address: Telegames, PO box 1855, Desoto, TX 75123  
Phone: 1-972-228-0690 E-mail: Sales@telegames.com  
Website: <http://www.telegames.com>

Trade n Games  
1057a Gravois Road, Fenton MO. 1-636-349-3113. Trade n Games is located on the bluffs off Gravois (the s is silent) overlooking Fenton, Mo. Reseller of video games from Pong to Gamecube.

If you represent a business that would benefit from advertising in the Jagfest program or appearing in the festival's dealer room to sell your product or offer live demonstration, e-mail Greg George at [greg@ataritimes.com](mailto:greg@ataritimes.com) or JT August at [starsabre@att.net](mailto:starsabre@att.net) for additional details and a pricing schedule.

For more information On Jag fest 2k2 e-mail Greg George at [greg@ataritimes.com](mailto:greg@ataritimes.com), James Garvin at [omc@omcgames.com](mailto:omc@omcgames.com), Daniel Iacovelli at [atarivideoclub@yahoo.com](mailto:atarivideoclub@yahoo.com) or JT August at [starsabre@att.net](mailto:starsabre@att.net) or visit the Jagfest 2002 site at <http://omcgames.com/jagfest>

(be sure to visit the Jagfest message board and post your ideas for this event.)

END PRESS RELEASE

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

AlltheWeb Claims Largest Search Index

Hoping to attract more mass appeal for an online search engine with a cult following, AlltheWeb.com on Monday declared that it indexes more Internet information than longtime pacesetter Google.

AlltheWeb, owned by Norway's Fast Search & Transfer, says its database spans 2.1 billion Web pages, just ahead of the 2.07 billion scanned by Google at the end of last week. AlltheWeb has been quietly building upon its previous foundation of 800 million pages over the past two months.

The rapid expansion represents the latest salvo aimed at Mountain View-based Google, whose growing popularity since its inception in 1998 has inspired a mixture of awe, jealousy and one-upmanship among competitors.

The challenges haven't toppled privately held Google so far. Besides operating one of the Web's most trafficked destinations, Google also provides search results for other prominent sites, including Yahoo and AOL.

AlltheWeb's effectiveness has already made it a hit among scientists, librarians and other researchers looking for more obscure data.

By expanding the amount of online turf that it scans, AlltheWeb believes it will become even more useful to a broader audience.

"Our goal is to develop the best search experience possible," said John M. Lervik, Fast Search's chief executive. "We really hope Google responds to this."

Google regards "quantity as just one component of search," said company spokesman David Krane. "We still believe we offer the most comprehensive search experience on the Internet."

While Google has long boasted about the breadth of its Web indexes, the company takes even greater pride in the complex formulas that it had developed to deliver quick results that list the most pertinent destinations.

SpamNet Enlists You To Fight Spam

Ordinary Web surfers could play a major role in stemming the rising tide of junk e-mail crippling the Net, if a new anti-spam company hits its mark.

After operating in stealth mode for nearly two-and-a-half years, San Mateo, Calif.-based Cloudmark on Wednesday is taking the wraps off a new spam-fighting tool, called SpamNet, which aims to use the power of the people to weed out unsolicited commercial e-mail.

Conceived by Napster co-founder Jordan Ritter and open-source developer Vipul Ved Prakash, the company is touting the benefits of democracy, networking and collaboration in the war against unscrupulous e-mail marketers.

The company does face challenges. It is charged with transforming a tool that's geared for a small Unix developer community into a product for the masses. It also must offer a system that's simple and effective to reach a critical mass. Finally, it must build in financial support for such a system.

Then there is the Internet itself, whose enormous strengths of openness, flexibility and redundancy have proven insurmountable foes for legions of companies that previously have marched off to vanquish the hordes of spam. Many, such as SpamCop and SpamKiller, already include tools to allow e-mail recipients to report spam to their Internet service providers, a form of democracy in action that has not proven terribly effective.

Technology pundits say most existing anti-spam solutions haven't been able to keep up with the rising flood of junk and the sophistication of marketers sending it. In this environment, Cloudmark is drawing attention for what some analysts call a new approach to the problem.

"What's exciting about Cloudmark is that it's a distributed response to a distributed problem," said Kevin Werbach, technology analyst at venture capital firm EDventure Holdings.

"There are so many spammers out there," he said, "that it's difficult to come up with sophisticated algorithms to catch all the spam and not catch all the e-mail. But if you harness the power of thousands or potentially millions of people on the network, then you can grow the response to the spam almost as fast as the spam itself is growing."

Despite repeated attempts to keep spam down to size, the enemy has proliferated: Internet researcher Jupiter estimates that consumers will receive 206 billion junk e-mailings in 2006--an average of 1,400 per person, compared with about 700 per person this year.

If Cloudmark is not the first company to address the problem, its claims are among the boldest. Prakash drew inspiration for the company's name from the sci-fi novel "A Fire Upon The Deep," by a former computer-science professor, Vernor Vinge, who wrote about a router the size of a planet "that could filter spam," Prakash said.

In an interview, Prakash and company CEO Karl Jacob said Cloudmark's software solves the problem of identifying spam and quickly updating e-mail filters by harnessing the intelligence of the Web community at large.

"It operates on a trust evaluation system; it evaluates the trustworthiness

of the user's suggestion to identify a spam message," said Jacob, an investor in the company who recently left his job as CEO of advice site Keen.com. "It's based on how long they've been in the community, how many messages they've sent that were verified. The effect is it allows a democratic vote."

The software is based on Prakash's open-source software Razor, a collaborative spam-filtering system that sifts out about 5 million messages per day. The technology has about 5,000 "users," or Internet Protocol addresses linked to the community, with more than 60 midsize ISPs. SpamNet will count new users as individuals, however.

Cloudmark's solution requires a free plug-in that plays a minor role in the background of Microsoft's Outlook, the only e-mail client the product is currently available for. Consumers will see a new file folder on the left side of Outlook deemed for spam and a toolbar at the top for reporting spam or "revoking a spam decision." Every time someone receives a new message he considers spam, that person would report the message to the program by clicking the first button.

As the software stands now, it filters junk into the spam folder based on 2.5 million "signatures," or combinations of zeros and ones, which are used to identify a junk mail message. The underlying technology attaches a signature to each incoming message, and based on a consensus among users, it will mark a signature as spam in real time. So the more people who participate, the greater depth the database will have with additional marked signatures.

The signatures are unlike typical spam-fighting tools that are based on "rules" or filters built around spoken language, headers or IP addresses of commercial messages. Anti-spam software company Brightmail uses rules-based filtering, for example. But Jacob says that model doesn't work well because it depends on humans to constantly write new rules and technology that can slow as it compares too many rules to each incoming message. In contrast, Cloudmark uses algorithms to efficiently find similar numerals or signatures in the database without scanning the entire set.

A spokesman for Brightmail, one of the largest spam-filtering services, said the company filtered more than 10 billion e-mails and blocked 1.5 billion junks mails in the past 12 months. The company's rules-based system is constantly updated to avoid latency in scanning messages, he said, adding that the majority of rules are written automatically, with some exceptions for those particularly challenging spam attacks.

Cloudmark says it intends to always offer a free product to consumers, with eventual plans to sell a more advanced service. It also expects to license its technology to enterprise customers, of which it already has some beta customers.

If anything, the company has the angst of Web users on its side.

"A community effort against spam is not something we've seen before, at least not on the scale on what they're attempting to gather," said Ray Everett-Church, chief privacy officer at ePrivacy Group, a Philadelphia-based consultancy. "At least they've got a very fertile community who are sick of spam and who are willing to try something new if it will stop it."

## Microsoft To Reinstate Java In Windows

In an about-face, Microsoft said Tuesday that it will reinstate the ability to run Java programs in Windows XP.

Microsoft said it would include its own Java software in the Service Pack 1 update to Windows XP due late this summer. In the long term, though, the company plans to remove Java from Windows altogether.

The reinstatement is a partial victory for Java inventor and Microsoft rival Sun Microsystems, which in the 1990s had hoped people would use the cross-platform language to write programs capable of running on any computer, regardless of the operating system used by the machine.

Jim Cullinan, Microsoft's lead product manager for Windows, said Microsoft will ship its own JVM, written in 1997 and based on version 1.1.4 of Java. Sun wants Microsoft to ship the more modern version, currently 1.4. Sun offers a download option on its Web page.

Sun praised the move but asked for more.

"Today's about-face decision by Microsoft to offer its Java (software) as a default component of Windows XP is good news for both consumers and software developers," Sun said in a statement. "It is unfortunate, though, that Microsoft insists on using an outdated and incompatible (version of Java) instead of a current and compatible one," and that Microsoft will stop distributing Java in 2004.

Faced with serious legal challenges by the Justice Department ( news - web sites), several states, Sun, AOL Time Warner and others, Microsoft has adopted a strategy that indicates the company thinks it might be better to bend than to break. In response to legal pressure in a federal antitrust suit, Microsoft is working to make it easier for customers to install third-party "middleware" such as Web browsers, media players or instant-messaging programs in Windows instead of having to use Microsoft's versions of these programs.

But the federal antitrust actions began four years ago and have the potential to drag on for years more. Some believe Microsoft is winning the war of attrition.

Microsoft doesn't lose much from the move but can gain by making itself appear more accommodating and interested in helping out computer users, Gartner analyst David Smith said.

"It's a very minor concession; it's not going to hurt them much at all," Smith said, adding that Microsoft still isn't a Java convert.

The move comes one day before closing arguments begin in the remedy hearing involving the software giant and nine states that didn't agree with the Justice Department's settlement. The timing of Tuesday's move "is not a coincidence," Smith said.

Sun's March antitrust lawsuit against the software titan triggered the change, Cullinan said.

The suit accuses Microsoft of trying to use its desktop computer dominance to take over the server market, where Sun is strong. The suit seeks, among

other things, to have Microsoft include in Windows Sun's Java virtual machine (JVM), software that lets a computer run Java programs.

Microsoft decided in April 2001 not to ship a Java virtual machine, instead adding a "download-on-demand" feature that Sun said in its antitrust suit violated settlement terms of an earlier Java legal dispute between the two companies.

Microsoft plans to remove the download-on-demand option "to take an issue off the table with the current legal action by Sun," Cullinan said, and therefore is including its JVM as the "best way to minimize any disruption" to customers. Java is used on some Web pages.

Cullinan said Microsoft told both Sun and the court of its decision. Sun said it would comment after reviewing Microsoft's position.

The terms of the settlement of the earlier Java suit gave Microsoft the right to ship its Java software in new products through Jan. 2, 2004, and in existing products through Jan. 2, 2008. Microsoft, meanwhile, is working on software similar to Java, including the C# programming language (pronounced "C-sharp") and accompanying software to let C# programs run on a variety of computing devices.

"For the next year and a half, we are going to include (the JVM) in Windows XP. Then we'll make the changes to make sure that moving forward, we don't put Windows or our customers at risk," Cullinan said, saying that the settlement prohibits Microsoft from updating the software to fix potential future security risks.

Cullinan also said Microsoft disagrees with Sun's assertion that its download-on-demand option violates the settlement of the earlier Java dispute.

Including Java gives Microsoft some legal fodder in its argument that it's complying with the legal requirement to make it easier to remove Microsoft middleware.

Sun's antitrust suit, filed in U.S. District Court in San Jose, Calif., draws heavily on an appeals court decision to uphold a finding a year ago that Microsoft illegally maintained its monopoly in desktop operating systems. Some experts believe Sun may have bitten off more than it can chew with its very broad suit.

#### Sun Micro Free Software Aimed to Undercut Microsoft

High-end computer maker Sun Microsystems Inc. announced on Wednesday a free software initiative aimed at undercutting Microsoft Corp. in the battle to set the standards of the next-generation Internet.

The battleground between Sun and Microsoft's .NET initiative is the layer of software that will form the backbone of the next generation Internet, and Sun will give away a key part, called an application server, that runs on Microsoft systems as well as the hit operating system, Linux.

Sun and Microsoft see a world of "Web services" in which clever software anticipates users' needs, such as automatically ordering parts for a

factory that is running low or finding directions to an appointment listed in a business person's calendar.

For that to happen, a layer of backbone software must stitch together computers that run operating systems and translate data between applications.

Sun has a good start, because its Java platform runs programs while sitting on top of many operating systems, including Windows, while Windows programs run only on Windows.

The next step is aimed at cementing the ascendance of Java, despite Microsoft plans to phase out support.

So Sun plans to give away for computers that run Windows, Linux and Unix operating systems from Hewlett-Packard Co. and IBM a basic version of its application server, a type of backbone software that runs custom applications necessary for web services and communicates data between applications.

If it succeeds, developers wooed by free software will create programs for its systems, rather than Microsoft's.

"We are going after the .NET developer and deployer and the Linux community developer and deployer," said Marge Breya, vice president of the Sun ONE software division.

"What we're really trying to do is bring together these three developer communities into a consolidated Java web services ignition, if you will," she said.

Santa Clara, California-based Sun is a former Internet star which called itself "the dot in dot-com" until the firms that bought its computers to run their networks began going bankrupt.

Sun hopes that the free software will stimulate sales of its servers and of other software tools, including more sophisticated versions of the application server, Breya said.

By setting the non-Microsoft standard, Sun is "making sure we have a right to compete," she said. "We define open standards, compete on implementation."

However, the free offer is hardly an assurance of success for Sun, whose hardware has long overshadowed its software.

Sun's competitive success in the application server market has been limited so far. In 2001 Sun slipped to fourth place in the market with a 7.9 percent share, behind BEA Systems Inc., International Business Machines Corp. and Oracle Corp., researcher IDC Corp reported.

BEA said Sun's free low-end offering would not compete with its application server that run for about \$200,000 and are used to build multimillion dollar corporate projects.

"I think Sun has created this perception that they're going to giving away what we currently sell," which was not the case, said Eric Stahl BEA's director of product marketing.

CSFB analyst George Gilbert agreed that BEA was not likely to be hurt,

saying the application server market was becoming split between a low end of near free "good enough" software and sophisticated high end platforms, like BEA.

### Microsoft Rejects Compromise in Antitrust Case

Microsoft refused on Wednesday to offer further concessions to end its antitrust case, rebuffing a federal judge's invitation to revisit the demands of nine states seeking stiffer sanctions against the software giant.

The state's proposed sanctions were "fundamentally flawed," Microsoft attorney John Warden told U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly during closing arguments.

"We can't remedy this by changing a few words here and there," Warden said. "We can't fix it."

The nine states, in contrast, heeded the judge's instructions and identified their most important demand -- a requirement for Microsoft to share computer code that allows rival software to work well with Microsoft's dominant Windows operating system.

The states accused the company of "thuggish" business practices in their closing presentation, and portrayed the judge as the last chance to stop Microsoft's bullying.

"I suggest to you that Microsoft still doesn't get it and you're the only one left to tell them what it's all about," states' attorney Brendan Sullivan told Kollar-Kotelly.

The nine states have refused to sign a settlement of the case reached in November between Microsoft and the U.S. Justice Department and endorsed by nine other states previously party to the four-year-old case.

Kollar-Kotelly issued an order on Tuesday telling both sides to come to court prepared to answer questions on how their proposals could be modified if she rejects their respective remedies as currently written - suggesting she is open to some hybrid of the two positions in a modified settlement agreement.

The judge's request "suggests that she's trying to understand what's most important to the parties and what causes the least amount of pain," said Mark Schechter, an antitrust attorney with the firm Howrey Simon Arnold & White.

"I think it's reasonably likely that the court will order some additional conduct restrictions" that go beyond the Justice Department settlement, Schechter said.

Outside the courthouse afterwards, the hold-out attorneys general said they were not surprised by Microsoft's decision to reject any further compromise.

"I think it's a gamble that the judge may not mean what she said and is going to go with what they want," said Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal.

The states said the sharing of key Windows computer code was even more important than demands for a version of Windows with removable features that could be replaced by competitors' software.

Microsoft would be forced to behave "more like a company facing competition and less like a firm existing in a comfortable monopoly" under the dissenting states' proposals said Steve Kunev, another attorney for the states.

Kunev accused Microsoft chairman Bill Gates of arrogance and advocating monopoly when he testified in April.

"Somehow they know better than anyone else what's best for this PC ecosystem. What's good for Microsoft is therefore good for the economy, good for consumers and good for everybody else," he said.

Warden, for Microsoft, accused Kunev of misrepresenting the company's position. "Microsoft does not claim that monopoly is the preferred form of industrial organization," he told Kollar-Kotelly.

Warden also took exception to Sullivan's portrayal of Microsoft as some kind of scofflaw. "We haven't failed to get some message. We haven't claimed that we're immune from the law or anything of that kind," he said.

Microsoft argued that the states demands go way beyond addressing the antitrust violations it actually committed and would harm consumers and the entire computer industry.

Warden said U.S. Supreme Court precedents for sweeping antitrust remedies, cited by Kunev for the states, were not applicable to the Microsoft case.

Last June, a federal appeals court upheld trial court findings that Microsoft illegally maintained its Windows monopoly in personal computer operating systems by acts that included commingling Web browser code with Windows to fend off Netscape's rival browser.

The appellate judges rejected breaking the company in two to prevent future antitrust violations, but sent the case to a new judge, Kollar-Kotelly, to consider the best remedy.

Microsoft has argued that the restrictions being sought by the states would benefit rivals like AOL Time Warner Inc. and Sun Microsystems Inc., and would deprive consumers of a reliable platform for software.

Under the Justice Department settlement, Microsoft would be required to let computer makers hide desktop icons for some features of its Windows operating system to allow the promotion of competing software by computer makers.

The hold-out states say stricter sanctions are needed to protect new technologies such as Internet services and handheld computers from any anti-competitive tactics.

The nine states still pursuing the case are California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Utah, West Virginia, plus the District of Columbia.

Twelve eBay users from around the country have been invited to company headquarters to give the Internet auction site's executives pieces of their minds: Customer service is lousy. The search engine is weak. Pop-up ads are deplorable.

The eBay manager writing down their gripes quickly fills a large sheet of paper, then two, then three, eventually taping so many onto a wall that new ones go on the door.

Michael Benson, a baseball card collector from St. Louis, adds his complaint: "eBay is going with the big sellers over the little sellers." Murmurs of assent can be heard around the table. "You've got to get back to mom and pop sellers," nods Judy Tomlin of Mecosta, Mich.

That complaint is not new, but it is becoming increasingly common among longtime eBay users. Many say eBay, committed to growth, is giving big companies an unfair advantage by prominently featuring their brand-name wares, creating tough competition for the millions of regular folks who made eBay huge.

"It's so infuriating to see the stock continually rise and know that it's happening because the little guy is taking it in the shins," said collectibles seller Tricia Spencer of Riverside, Calif., who was not among the 12 users invited to headquarters. "It's like a kingdom where the serfs have done all the work and the king eats hale and hearty while the serfs starve."

eBay executives say the charge is unfounded. But they acknowledge that after eBay's astonishing rise in recent years, it is more difficult than ever to stay connected to its treasured "community" the hobbyists and small businesses that trade everything from AstroTurf to zithers, and dole out "feedback points" that reflect their online reputations.

"Our communication, frankly, to the community is broken," Bill Cobb, eBay's director of marketing, told the group of 12 at eBay's most recent "Voice of the Customer" session. "We have to figure out a better way."

eBay hopes relations get a big boost from its first "community celebration," called eBay Live, June 21-23 in Anaheim. More than 3,000 users are expected to mingle with company managers, trade advice on how to buy and sell things in more cost-effective ways, hear a speech by CEO Meg Whitman and attend an awards ceremony.

Founded in 1995, eBay is by far the world's top Internet auction site, with nearly 50 million registered users and sites in 27 countries.

It long ago shed its roots as an online flea market. With big companies such as Dell and IBM now unloading goods on eBay, the site is more like a giant mall with a flea market and a used-car dealership in the parking lot.

To attract even more corporate sellers, eBay and consultancy Accenture plan to launch a service to facilitate auctions for companies with discontinued or out-of-season merchandise.

Executives say such deals are essential for eBay's long-term financial growth, which will come largely by expanding its slim market share in major consumer categories. More brand-name products will bring new buyers, which ultimately helps big and small sellers, they say.

They also point out that eBay charges all sellers the same fees between 30 cents and \$3.30 to list most items, depending on their value, and a 1.5 percent to 5.25 percent commission on successful sales. And they say 96 percent of the \$13 billion in merchandise that will be sold on eBay this year is from small and medium-sized businesses.

Even so, many sellers say they are feeling pinched by increased competition while the listing and commission fees they pay to eBay have only gone up.

Prices of collectibles on eBay dropped 11 percent in May from last year and 25 percent from 2000, according to AuctionBytes.com, which tracks Internet trading. Perhaps more telling, collectibles' average "sell-through rate" the percentage of listed items that sold was 55 percent last month, down from 72 percent in 2000.

"The traffic to my auctions has slowed to almost half since the influx of discounters and wholesalers into the categories," said Mischelle Martin of Los Angeles, who sells women's clothing on eBay.

Brian Burke, eBay's senior manager of community development, argues that such developments are a natural part of eBay's marketplace system.

"We haven't eliminated competition by putting it online," he said. "We've probably actually enhanced competition."

Promoting that benign image hasn't proven easy. Adding to the perception that eBay is unresponsive: On its online message boards, many community questions are answered not by real eBay staff but by fellow members or with canned, automatically generated replies.

"If you ever have a question regarding costs or your invoice, try to find some help from a real person," said Doug Duguay, who sells cycling clothes on eBay from Portland, Ore. "It's very difficult."

eBay has tried to help users for years by offering "eBay University," a traveling series of seminars with buying and selling tips. The "Voice of the Customer" sessions began in 1999 and are staged every two months.

The meetings give eBay a chance to hear complaints, solicit opinions on new services under development and explain the rationale for contentious policies. The users are asked to keep in touch through regular conference calls after they return home.

After taking part in the most recent session, Lance Shoeman of Canon City, Colo., said he was impressed by eBay's receptiveness but thinks it needs to work harder at community relations rather than merely "allowing a handful of people to bend their ear every now and then."

"They're listening," he said. "but not properly communicating that fact to their members."

#### 'Star Trek' Fans Eye Captain's Seat on eBay

Some lucky "Star Trek" fan will have a chance to take the captain's seat in an upcoming auction available on eBay.

Captain Kirk's command chair from the starship Enterprise will be one of some 374 mostly "Star Trek"-related lots that will go up for auction next Thursday.

The auction will be conducted live in Los Angeles by auctioneer Profiles in History; however, eBay members can preview the auction catalog online and participate online via eBay's Live Auctions technology.

Much of the items come from the collection of Bob Justman, an associate producer on the original "Star Trek" series, said Lorna Hart, general manager at Profiles in History.

"There's some really incredible stuff (that gives insight) into how these brains were thinking when they created the show," Hart said.

eBay representatives did not return calls seeking comment about the "Star Trek" auction.

This is the latest high-profile auction on eBay. Last month, Guernsey's auction house sold a collection of Grateful Dead memorabilia on the site, including two one-of-a-kind guitars formerly owned by the band's lead singer, Jerry Garcia. In April, a round of golf with Tiger Woods sold on eBay for \$425,000.

Last fall, George Lucas sold memorabilia from the rival "Star Wars" universe on eBay in a charity auction. Among the jewels in the auction were a lightsaber prop used in "Star Wars: Episode I--The Phantom Menace," which fetched more than \$45,000, and a Stormtrooper helmet used in "The Empire Strikes Back" that sold for more than \$35,000.

The "Star Trek" memorabilia figures to out-duel the "Star Wars" auction. The Captain Kirk command chair alone has an estimated value of between \$100,000 and \$150,000, and the bidding on it starts at \$80,000.

Other notable pieces in the "Star Trek" auction include the costume and the helmet and gloves worn by Ricardo Montalban as Khan in "Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan." Profiles in History estimated the value of both lots at between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

"Those are big pieces for followers," Hart said.

The auction includes an assortment of other costumes, such as several worn by William Shatner as Captain Kirk; a pair of prosthetic earpieces worn by Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Spock; the original film of the second pilot episode of the original "Star Trek" series; and a collection of production memos from various "Star Trek" episodes.

In addition, the auction includes a few non-"Star Trek" lots. Among them are costumes, props and other memorabilia from such films as the 2001 remake of "Planet of the Apes," "Logan's Run" and "Men in Black." The last lot in the auction is a collection of Jimi Hendrix's original Army medical reports from his stint in the military in the early 1960s.

eBay members who want to bid on the auction need to register for it, indicating that they have read the terms of the auction. Unlike most eBay auctions, Profiles in History will charge successful bidders a premium of 15 percent of the final purchase price if they pay in cash or 18 percent if they pay with a credit card.

The auction is the second "Star Trek" auction handled by Profiles in

History. The auction house held the previous one in December. The standout items in that auction included a phaser rifle prop that was used in "Star Trek: First Contact" that sold for \$45,000, Hart said.

### 'Proof of Concept' Virus Infects Picture Files

Innovation is usually a good thing when it comes to technology and the Internet, but a new computer virus capable of infecting .JPG picture files shared over the Web has antivirus experts concerned.

The virus, known as Perrun, is what is called a "proof of concept" virus, which means it was written to prove a technical possibility. While Perrun is not spreading and poses minimal danger to user machines, the virus may mark a new type of threat that could reach anyone clicking on photos of friends or family.

Experts also said they are concerned that virus writers will build on Perrun's blueprint, which paves the way to infect other digital data files, including pictures, MP3 and other music files, movies or text.

JPEG is a standardized image-compression mechanism. The acronym stands for "joint photographic experts group," the original name of the committee that wrote the standard.

Experts agreed there is little cause for concern. While the virus does infect .JPG files, it cannot spread itself in the same file and requires an extractor file, as well.

However, the virus -- whose author submitted it this week to antivirus firm McAfee.com - potentially could be the basis for an outbreak via the popular picture files or some other format.

"They haven't been able to get it into one single file to infect and propagate," McAfee.com virus research manager April Goostree told NewsFactor. "That's the next step, and that's what we'll be looking for."

While most viruses infect program files capable of running themselves, Perrun represents the first malicious code that infects regular files such as pictures, text or even MP3s.

Security Focus senior threat analyst Ryan Russell told NewsFactor that he was not concerned about the threat of the Perrun virus. However, he said, the concept of it represents -- that is, infecting a regular file type with a special viewer and executing arbitrary code -- could mean that "any type of file at all," including .JPG, .GIF and other file formats, might be susceptible.

Experts say the proof-of-concept Perrun virus may be taking the trust out of .JPG and MP3.

Russell, who called .JPG "a totally trusted download," at present, said the popular picture files found on Web sites and shared over the Internet will remain trusted until the files with the extension actually cause adversity for users.

Goostree went further, describing .JPG and MP3 as "two very trusted sources that are now compromised."

"Now, every file type should be suspect, and that's going to cause a huge problem," Goostree added, referring to consumer and business approaches to file-sharing as well as issues of blocking and scanning files.

The typical pattern of virus writers -- building on previous viruses, using security gaps left open by other viruses, and taking advantage of hacker techniques - makes Perrun's capabilities troubling.

Russell cited the example of two totally different viruses building on each other accidentally, adding that for viruses, working in pairs is nothing new.

Goostree said it is "a fairly large leap" to enable a .JPG virus to infect and spread among personal computers in one file, but it is only a matter of time before it is accomplished.

"The issue for the general public is education," Goostree said. "This is going to be the next big thing, most likely."

#### Anti-Censorship Advocate Draws Heat

Internet activist Bennett Haselton has made a name for himself by helping minors disable filtering programs designed to block Web sites that their parents deem offensive or pornographic.

His Peacefire.org site offers free downloads and details methods for circumventing filtering software that critics say also inevitably blocks out a range of useful, even beneficial, Internet content.

Yet while Haselton's crusade, launched six years ago while he was a college student, has made him a hero among some Web-savvy minors, he's something of a supervillain to filtering advocates.

"He's being totally irresponsible," said Marc Kanter, marketing director for Santa Barbara, Calif.-based Solid Oak Software, which makes the CYBERSitter program.

"When he started Peacefire, he was a kid himself," Kanter said. "Basically he was enticing minors into his beliefs and activities, which was to undermine parents' rights. As an adult now, he should know better than that."

Haselton, a 23-year-old who simultaneously earned a bachelor's and master's degree in mathematics from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., says his objection to Net censorship is not born so much of passion as logic.

The criteria used by filter program designers is too arbitrary, he says.

Besides, children should be able to view whatever Web page they like, Haselton asserts: "I think intellectual development is one of the fundamental human rights and it's also a right that people under 18 have."

Haselton was heartened by a federal appeals court decision last month that struck down the Children's Internet Protection Act, ruling that public libraries cannot be forced to install filtering software in order to

receive federal funding.

But many who share Haselton's opposition to filtering consider his position extreme.

"I'm not of the opinion that parents don't have any say where children should go" on the Internet, said Chris Hunter, a University of Pennsylvania researcher who testified on behalf of librarians at the trial.

Hunter worries that Haselton's line of thinking "that parents shouldn't have a right to monitor their children's access lends fuel to the other side saying that we're somehow uncaring about the issue."

Haselton, who works from a cramped one-bedroom apartment in Seattle's eastern suburbs, was raised as a U.S. citizen in Copenhagen, Denmark, where his mother taught music to diplomats' children, among others.

After graduating from Vanderbilt at age 20, he went west to work for Microsoft. But he left in January 2000, frustrated that he was writing code rather than tracking bugs for the software giant.

In addition to running Peacefire, Haselton now does battle with purveyors of Internet spam and works to ferret out security flaws on the Internet.

He made about \$15,000 in bounty from Netscape last year for discovering flaws in the company's browser software. And last month he gained notoriety for finding flaws with Anonymizer.com, a popular Internet privacy service that lets Web surfers visit sites anonymously.

"That was pretty sophisticated," Anonymizer President Lance Cottrell said. "The fact that he was able to find it is testimony to what a clever fellow he is."

Haselton also has won 10 of 14 small-claims cases and thousands of dollars in judgments against senders of e-mail spam - though he has yet to collect a cent. Washington is one of about two dozen states with anti-spam laws.

On a recent weekday, virtually every square foot of floor space in Haselton's apartment was covered by stacks of programming books, floppy disks, empty boxes, dirty clothes and an upended office chair. Four computers dominated a corner table, where Haselton probes for vulnerabilities in filtering programs.

Haselton says that while he intends to keep sniffing out bugs for bounty, he hopes to focus more of his energy on Peacefire's crusade.

"This is something that practically nobody else is working on, and only a couple of people in the world actually know as much about the blocking software issue," he said.

#### House Panel OKs Rewritten 'Virtual' Child-Porn Ban

A House of Representatives committee voted on Wednesday to reinstate a recently rejected ban on Internet child pornography, hoping that a more narrowly tailored version would pass courtroom muster.

The Supreme Court struck down a previous law that outlawed "virtual" child

pornography in April, saying it could criminalize simulated sex acts in mainstream movies like "Traffic" and "Romeo and Juliet."

By a vote of 22 to 3, the House Judiciary Committee approved a more narrowly drafted bill that would outlaw only computer images that were indistinguishable from actual photographs or movies. Pornography involving prepubescent children would be outlawed entirely, "virtual" or not.

Defendants in child-pornography cases would have to prove that the images in question were entirely computer generated and not a depiction of actual events. Most criminal cases in the United States place the burden of proof on prosecutors.

In debate on Tuesday, bill sponsor Lamar Smith said prosecutors would find it impossible to prove whether a pornographic image was a digital assemblage or an actual photograph once it has been scanned into a computer.

"Retransmission makes it impossible to tell if it's a real picture or not," the Texas Republican said.

But some Democrats balked at the so-called "affirmative defense" provision, saying it would criminalize protected speech and would end up on the judicial scrap heap along with previous congressional attempts to control online smut.

"I think this bill is the newest in a series of attempts to do what the Supreme Court has said we repeatedly cannot do," said New York Democrat Jerry Nadler.

Fellow Democrat Adam Schiff, a former prosecutor, said it was the only way to give the ban any teeth.

"If we only go after pornography produced using real children ... we will effectively preclude any real prosecution of child pornography," said Schiff, a Californian.

A spokesman for House Majority Leader Dick Armey said the bill would be taken up quickly by the full House now that it had cleared the Judiciary Committee.

"It's a priority, and we want to do it quickly," said spokesman Richard Diamond.

A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate by Missouri Democrat Jean Carnahan.

The committee also approved two bills that would make it easier to prosecute "sex tourists" who travel abroad to have sex with children, and allow judges to require monitoring of sex offenders after they served their prison terms.

#### High Court to Consider Net Filters

The Bush administration renewed its legal fight against Internet pornography on Thursday, asking the Supreme Court to permit Congress to pressure public libraries to block sexually explicit Web sites.

A three-judge panel in Philadelphia last month struck down the Children's Internet Protection Act, which would have taken effect next month. The law, signed by President Clinton in 2000, required libraries to install software filters on Internet computers or risk the loss of federal funds.

Public schools and school libraries are still subject to the law.

The Justice Department, acting on behalf of the Federal Communications Commission and the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, formally notified the Supreme Court on Thursday it will appeal last month's ruling.

The panel from the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia ruled unanimously that the law relies on filtering programs that also block sites on politics, health, science and other topics that should not be suppressed. Its decision was the third time since 1996 that courts have struck down U.S. laws aimed at keeping youngsters from seeing Internet pornography.

"Given the crudeness of filtering technology, any technology protection measure mandated by CIPA will necessarily block access to a substantial amount of speech whose suppression serves no legitimate government interest," the judges wrote.

Under the law, adults could have asked for librarians to turn off the filters. But the court said some patrons might be too embarrassed to ask, and librarians may not know how.

Justice Department lawyers have argued that Internet smut is so pervasive that protections are necessary to keep it away from youngsters, and that the law simply calls for libraries to use the same care in selecting online content that they use for books and magazines.

They also pointed out that libraries could turn down federal funding if they want to provide unfiltered Web access.

Critics of filter technology have argued that the software still is easily tricked into accidentally blocking Web sites that are not pornographic.

#### Bumps Rising In Napster Buyout

Napster's road to being acquired by German giant Bertelsmann is getting bumpier, thanks to a small music-software company with a history of David-and-Goliath battles.

In documents filed with a Delaware court Tuesday, PlayMedia Systems said it provided key parts of the Napster technology, which the company couldn't automatically transfer to Bertelsmann.

PlayMedia, which created the MP3-playing functions of Napster's original file-swapping software, along with some of the security features of the planned subscription service, says it isn't trying to derail the \$8 million bankruptcy buyout. It's just notifying the court, which is still in the early stages of the bankruptcy proceedings, that it has an interest, the company's attorney said.

"We're just trying to protect PlayMedia's licenses," said Richard Riley, the Delaware attorney representing the company. "Depending on what

(Napster's) position is on the PlayMedia license, we may have to object to the transaction."

PlayMedia is far from a household name, but it has made headlines before. In 1999, it sued Nullsoft, the company that created the popular Winamp MP3 software, for \$20 million, contending Nullsoft had used its code to create the software. When America Online agreed to buy Nullsoft later that year, it quickly settled with PlayMedia. The terms of that settlement were not made public.

Last year, a judge temporarily barred AOL from distributing a new version of its flagship Internet software, saying it had likely violated its license with PlayMedia.

While unlikely to derail Bertelsmann's acquisition of struggling file swapper Napster, PlayMedia's involvement could delay the transfer or make it more expensive for the German media company, which has already spent more than \$85 million keeping its protege afloat.

Bertelsmann agreed to buy Napster for \$8 million last month, just days after an earlier, pricier buyout bid collapsed. As part of the deal, the file-swapping company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, which will help it clear much of its accumulated debt.

As part of the bankruptcy proceedings, the door must be opened to other bids and to objections by creditors, however.

Other bidders are expected to be scarce in this case--any company that steps in would inherit as debt the tens of millions of dollars Bertelsmann loaned Napster. But the process does allow other companies, such as PlayMedia, an opportunity to have their claims heard in court.

PlayMedia's filing contained some interesting insight into how Napster had been working in its difficult late days. The original contract to provide Napster's MP3-playing capabilities was a written, nonexclusive license, the company's attorney said. Legally, that means it can't automatically be transferred to Bertelsmann, Riley said.

But there is no written contract for the PlayMedia technology inside Napster's new subscription service, which--according to the filing - included MP3 playing and security features. Instead, that contract is "oral and implied," the filing said. Napster has not asked permission to transfer either license, the company said.

A Napster representative had no immediate comment on the filing.

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